



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Public School 4**

**196 - 25 Peck Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11365**

**Principal: Marcy Berger**

**Dates of review: January 29 - 31, 2007**

**Reviewer: Ronnie Solow**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Public School 4 Queens, a District 75 school, is located on seven sites in northern Queens. The school serves 420 severely emotionally challenged and autistic children, enrolled in programs with standard and alternate assessments. The students are in pre-kindergarten through grade 6, and 9 through 12. All students are mandated for a twelve-month school year.

The student population composition is 58% Black, 22% Hispanic, 15% White, and 4% Asian and other groups. Eighty-three percent of students follow a standard assessment curriculum and 17% have alternate assessment requirements. The student body is comprised of 84% male and 16% female. The individualized education plans generate the related services every student receives. Many students have individual paraprofessionals assigned to assist them with their health or behavioral needs.

Alternate assessment students are learning through applied behavior analysis techniques, using the picture exchange communication system. Data folios, prepared for the targeted age groups in this category, as mandated by the State, are assessed for accuracy and independence of task accomplishment.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is highly visible and knows her students well.
- The principal is a knowledgeable special educator who has implemented a strong academic emphasis.
- The principal, assistant principals, and site coordinators work collaboratively and cooperatively.
- Rules, regulations and routines are well known and followed by students and staff.
- Parents and staff appreciate the openness and accessibility of the principal.
- The building is well maintained and the halls and classrooms are decorated with authentic student work samples.
- Uniformity of instruction, differentiated learning and emotional well-being are promoted in the classrooms.
- All students are treated with respect and encouraged to reach their full potential.
- Budget is directed towards increasing services for students.
- Formal and alternate assessment data drives the instructional program.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop the analysis of data by sub-group including ethnicity, to ensure that all groups are achieving as well as they can.
- Expand opportunities for alternatives to formal observation for senior staff.
- Continue to develop strategies to involve parents of high school students in the school life of their children.
- Further develop initiatives to encourage good attendance and discourage truancy.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well developed school.**

Public School 4 Queens is a school with a culture of high expectations and the drive to bring every student to maximum potential. The principal and the three assistant principals work with the staff in a collegial and collaborative fashion. The principal's motto, "Reach for the Stars", is evident throughout the school.

The team approach to educating the students is practiced at the school. The administrative team, teachers, paraprofessionals, and related service providers know the students well and provide documented, detailed information about each student. Case conferencing and team meetings to discuss specific students are a regular part of the school program.

The use of data drives the instructional program. Individual education plans, standard assessments, alternate assessment data and informal assessment information are used regularly to create and provide the specific education program for each of the emotionally challenged or autistic students at the school.

The performance level of the school has consistently risen over the past three years when students are attending the school regularly. The school data shows that Public School 4 Queens outperforms other schools in District 75.

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and staff gather many forms of data for each student, class and grade. Formal assessments from State examinations, Princeton interim assessments, as well as other City tests in reading, mathematics, social studies and science, inform the teachers about student progress. Teacher-made tests and end of unit tests from mathematics or literacy programs provide additional sources of information. All students, whether mandated for standard or alternate assessment measures, are provided with the educational program that meets their needs. Students in the alternate assessment program who can read, write, and/or perform mathematical calculations are provided with that instruction with appropriate accommodations at all seven sites.

Students in the alternate assessment category are evaluated using the Brigance methodology of discrete trials in a highly structured environment that enables the students to learn. Students receive a broad range of positive reinforcements until the learning becomes internalized. The picture exchange communication system uses pictures to address the communication deficits the children typically exhibit. As a result of its effective use, these students generally develop verbal communication as well as picture

communication skills. Data is kept to track student progress over time. State data folios are prepared for submission to the State for the specified age groups.

High school age students take the State examinations in order to earn a diploma or fulfill the requirements of their program in order to earn an individual education plan diploma. The starting point for every student is the individual education plan. Teachers begin by reading the document and reviewing the student's testing history from the City readout. Data from all of the State reports are incorporated into each student's educational plan. The unique educational needs of each student, and the determined condition, are the primary focus rather than comparisons by sub-group.

The school compares its data to other District 75 schools across the City. They collect data by class, grade, gender and assessment category, as well as for each individual student but does not yet analyze on the basis of ethnicity. Constant monitoring of student progress takes place with the intent of moving a student to a less restrictive environment once the behavioral component warrants the move.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan, and the goals and objectives outlined in the principal's performance review, set forth the focused plan for the school. Each document contains measurable outcomes and a benchmark calendar for the attainment of the goals.

The principal and staff meet formally and informally to set goals for each student. Each individual education plan prescribes the specific procedures and accommodations for the student. Differentiated instruction, materials that address all learning channels, and developing positive attitudes about self, academic endeavors, behavior, and emotional growth and development are aspects of the goal-setting. Teachers meet through common planning periods, faculty meetings, administrative periods, team meetings and conferences, case conferences as well as scheduled City-wide professional development days. Parents, related service providers and paraprofessionals are invited to participate to the fullest extent possible. Students are involved in discussion of their progress where appropriate. Nonverbal students receive information about expectations through behavioral reinforcers and incentive reward programs.

Struggling learners and students who are repeating a grade are targeted for academic intervention services and monitored more closely than other students. The individual education plans are examined for accuracy or the need to reconvene a meeting to revise the document. All student individual education plans are revised four times per year to coincide with the report card periods. Every teacher receives the student work folder from the previous teacher. Scores are examined for strengths and weaknesses and specific areas of need for the child and flexible strategy groups within a class.

All 3rd and 5th grade students who will take standard assessments this year, as well as 9th graders, receive additional support through academic intervention services. The assistant principal monitors the service and meets regularly with the provider to assess the success of the work. An additional part-time teacher was hired to provide tutoring services for struggling learners. In each classroom, kits, manipulatives, extensive libraries,

computers and computer games are evident in learning centers. Student work is posted throughout the classrooms and hallways. Related services are provided using push-in/pull-out models of service.

Parents receive report cards, testing information and updates on annual reviews for individual education plans four times per year. Every night, a progress sheet goes home in the backpack and indicates homework, behavior and any other information the teacher needs to impart to the parent. Phone calls report breakthroughs, progress and intervention the teacher needs from the parent. End-of-year information is shared in June or at the close of the summer program.

The administrators, the staff, and the parent coordinator are constantly reaching out for additional parent involvement. The staff are examining ways to develop strategies that will increase parental involvement at the high school level. Parents participate on the school leadership team and in the creation of the Comprehensive Education Plan. Professional development activities also assist parents with strategies for working with their student at home. One example is working with the picture exchange communication system to increase student communication capacity. Expectations are conveyed through the communication notebooks, progress reports, scheduled meetings and the open-door policy.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

Students participating in the standard assessment program receive instruction in the approved City curriculum designed for the cognitive development level for every student. A range of appropriate programs have been selected for use. Science, social studies, technology, physical education, music and art follow the State guidelines. Additional support programs are chosen to best meet the needs of these particular students. Higher-functioning autistic students are included in the balanced literacy and mathematics programs as appropriate. Literacy development is infused into the high school and elementary curriculum through a creative integrative arts educator grant that brings artists into the classroom. For example, students write a play, build the sets and perform their work.

The close knowledge of classroom teams is well used to match programs to the needs of each student. The Brigance Inventory for alternate assessment students supports the classroom curriculum through the applied behavioral analysis discrete trials and the use of the picture exchange communication system. This program is tailored to the individual needs of every student in the program through the differentiation of instruction and materials. The 3rd, 5th and 9th grade State data folios and student work portfolios have earned high scores over the past two years, evidence that the school’s use of data is supporting learning well. Students are busy, engaged and actively working at the task at hand in conjunction with teachers, paraprofessionals and related service staff.

Budgeting and staffing decisions support student learning, growth and development. An additional teacher was hired to tutor struggling students. Through the use of the school budget and working collaboratively with the Regional Operations Center and District 75, two playgrounds were built to increase the physical and social development of the youngest students. They were created with input from the occupational therapy staff,

physical therapists, and speech and language providers. New social studies and science textbooks and materials and leveled libraries were purchased. An additional grant provided the means to create the new technology laboratory. Scheduling is carefully carried out to provide students with the appropriate services mandated in their individual education plans. Scheduling and placement of staff may be changed according to the needs of the students.

Attendance, while still not as high as the school would like, has steadily risen over the past three years. It is rigorously pursued. The attendance committee has created a plan to improve attendance at the high school level. First day of absence phone calls, home visits and incentives all help to promote good attendance. After 20 days, the student goes on the City's list of extended absentees for further investigation. Truancy is of high incidence for the high school population, and is also being rigorously addressed. Many students have interrupted formal education histories due to a variety of factors. An incentive program, including individual student rewards, is built into the behavior plans of all the students. Good behavior brings participation in many desirable activities, including the basketball team. Students are well-known to administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers. They generally trust that adults will help them if needed. Non-verbal students use the picture exchange communication system to make their needs known and to respond to questions.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

New hirings are done with care to build the best possible team. The administrative team interviews prospective staff members. Candidates are asked specific questions relative to their knowledge of special education instruction, such as their knowledge of applied behavioral analysis, picture exchange communication system, behavior modification and a willingness to perform all necessary functions of the job.

Extensive professional development activities assist the teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers in their work with the students. Columbia University Teachers' College provides professional development for staff members. District 75 offers many helpful professional development workshops for teachers, paraprofessionals and parents, well attended by staff members. The principal and participating teachers in these programs bring the knowledge to the rest of the staff through turn-key training. In addition, Rutgers University is working in the school with staff on the applied behavioral analysis and picture exchange communication system procedures.

Observations take place daily through learning walks, with feedback as appropriate. Formal observations are carried out by the administrators as per the teacher's contract, although there is no alternative to the formal observation process for skilled, senior staff teachers. The principal has formed a committee to develop a menu of activities to respond to teachers' needs and the school's priorities. Inter-visitations to observe good practice are scheduled within the school and other sites. Staff learn from each other by engaging in workshops and discussions about strategies to improve classroom outcomes. Classroom staff and related service providers review and analyze student data at regularly scheduled team conferences.

Partnerships with external groups bring additional resources to the school community. The two playgrounds were funded through school funds and the computer laboratory was funded through grants from outside sources. High school students participate in work-study at Creedmore Hospital, Buena Vida Nursing Home, and the Bernard Fineson Center, providing them with opportunities to gain appropriate work and affective behaviors. Students participate in Penny Harvest and City Harvest.

The principal is highly respected by students, staff and parents. Her ability to lead contributes to the orderly environment and smooth operation of the school sites. She has developed a parent handbook and a behavior management handbook, Steps to Success, for the staff, to help to promote a calm tone in the school and to ensure that all are clear about the expectations. All groups praise her ability, educational knowledge, open-door policy and inter-personal skills. They describe her as a warm, nurturing, caring educator. Parents express their confidence in the principal and staff, one parent going so far as to state she had moved into the area so she could enroll her child in this program.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and assistant principal meet with individual teachers and teams on a regular basis to review individual education plans, classroom work and behavior plans. Revisions are immediate when they are required. Teacher-made assessments, Princeton Review interim assessments, Brigance data, lesson checklists and academic intervention services information assist teachers in making immediate modifications to the academic services for each student.

The principal meets with her cabinet monthly and with her assistant principals bi weekly to strategize and plan for each of the seven sites. Concrete problem-solving methods are employed to address any situation that has arisen. Immediate actions are put into place. Working throughout the seven sites, the principal and site supervisors keep in constant contact through e-mail and telephone as an aid to communication.

The data serves as a benchmark for planning for every student, class and grade. The goals and objectives are included in the Comprehensive Education Plan, the principal's goals and objectives and those of the assistant principals. The Comprehensive Education Plan is developed by the school leadership team, representing the whole school community and ensures that the plan serves the seven sites in the school. The principal includes members from each of the sites in every meeting and goal-setting procedures.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Public School 4 Queens (PS 004)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		<b>X</b>	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			<b>X</b>
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			<b>X</b>
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
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3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>			∅ ✓ +
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>			∅ ✓ +
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X